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Summary record of the 2nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 4 October 2016, at 3 p.m.

Chair:	Ms. Mejía Vélez	(Colombia)
later:	Mr. Glossner	(Germany)
later:	Ms. Mejía Vélez	(Colombia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 28: Social development (*continued*) (A/71/188)

(a) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/71/61-E/2016/7 and A/71/214)

(b) Literacy for life: shaping future agendas (*continued*) (A/71/177)

1. **Ms. AlFassam** (Kuwait) said that, despite measures taken and progress achieved in the follow-up to the implementation of the outcome of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the realization of development goals for persons with disabilities, many stumbling blocks remained, including data gaps. To protect and support the disabled, Kuwait had established a public authority for disability affairs, one of whose major undertakings was to conduct surveys of disability and establish disability databases. Kuwait provided training, education and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, access to sustainable livelihoods and a broad array of services. It would spare no effort to achieve their full inclusion in society, in accordance with Kuwait Vision 2035.

2. In 2016 Kuwait had enacted a law giving older persons the right to a monthly allowance and tax-free health care. Under its laws, orphans must receive a stipend and an education. Indeed, all children in Kuwait, whether girls or boys, citizens or residents, had a right to free education. She called on the international community to shoulder shared responsibility for promoting the welfare of the peoples of the world in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. **Ms. Huttunen** (Finland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that migrants and refugees were disproportionately young. Underlining the need for better education and employment opportunities for young people, recognized in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/71/L.1), she called for greater emphasis on vocational education and entrepreneurship training. Improved access to education and employment would also help to combat marginalization and radicalization among the young. To increase their sense of inclusion and belonging, they should be able to participate in sports and hobbies, which built community, and to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes. Young people must be recognized as drivers of positive change.

4. Start-ups and the spirit they embodied had the potential to save the world; indeed, they had already made a significant impact. Largely led by the young, they required investors willing to believe in young entrepreneurs.

5. Narrow-minded nationalism, racism and violent extremism were on the rise. Leaders everywhere should lead by example, condemning all forms of racial discrimination, violence and hate speech. Respect for human rights was fundamental, even and especially in difficult times.

6. **Ms. Joubli** (Switzerland) said that Switzerland had launched a national initiative to improve access to the job market for women and older people. Based on close coordination among business, government and labour as well as between government authorities, it was designed to build skills, facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life, keep older workers on the job longer and combat the labour shortage through innovation.

7. **Mr. Penseyres** (Switzerland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that unemployment, poverty, lack of education and limited prospects made young people susceptible to hate propaganda. To ensure that they could find employment, Switzerland emphasized quality education and on-the-job training. To encourage social inclusion and instil core values and responsibility, it supported extracurricular activities and youth organizations. A solid value system was the best protection against indoctrination. Promoting values such as democracy, civic duty and solidarity among the young should be an international priority.

8. **Ms. Mircheva** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that her generation's tremendous potential could be tapped by ensuring equal youth participation at all levels of decision-making. According to a survey conducted by the Bulgarian youth delegates, young people in her country saw a clear correlation between low levels of youth participation and the lack of quality education and jobs. They considered quality education essential for meaningful participation in social and economic life and increasingly appreciated the advantages of non-formal education. She called on Governments to

recognize non-formal education, to develop systems for validating it and to ensure support and funding for its main providers, particularly youth-led and youth organizations.

9. **Ms. Tsolova** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that vulnerable and marginalized young people were the most likely to be unemployed. As a social entrepreneur working with persons with disabilities, she saw social entrepreneurship as a potential major force for the inclusion of disabled people in the labour market and society as a whole. She called on the international community to promote and support social entrepreneurship among young people, who had the best solutions for issues affecting them directly. Young people could and should be drivers of change at the local, national and global levels.

10. **Ms. Brooke** (United States of America) said that social exclusion had an impact on political empowerment, health outcomes and economic well-being. The United States was committed to eliminating social exclusion and discrimination domestically and through foreign policy. It had worked with others to ensure that recent international agendas and frameworks for development mentioned persons with disabilities, older persons and other often-marginalized groups. It was vitally important to include civil society in discussions of social inclusion, social development and human rights by, inter alia, giving its representatives access to the Third Committee and other United Nations forums.

11. Her Government had worked to promote girls' literacy, which was a stepping stone to further education. Countries with more girls in secondary school tended to have lower maternal and infant mortality rates, lower incidence of HIV/AIDS and better child nutrition.

12. **Ms. Yparraguirre** (Philippines) said that persons with disabilities were an integral part of Philippine society. Her country's Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities, which had preceded the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by more than 10 years, had been amended in March to expand benefits and privileges for the disabled. Other national laws provided for the establishment of a disabilities affairs office in every province, city and municipality, allocated positions for persons with disabilities in all government offices and prohibited the ridicule of such persons. The Philippines' disaster risk management programme identified persons with disabilities as a vulnerable group needing special attention, and it was aligning its data collection systems with international requirements in order to address the disability data gap.

13. To make the workplace more inclusive, the Philippines had recently enacted a law prohibiting and penalizing age discrimination in employment. It had also strengthened the law promoting the employment of students. The Philippines remained committed to enabling marginalized and vulnerable groups to contribute to and participate in national development.

14. **Mr. Chauhan** (India) said that, despite progress in some parts of the world, millions of people in developing countries had been left behind. Fully realizing human rights for all, including the right of all peoples to development, would require an institutional framework and structural reforms that encompassed all three dimensions of sustainable development.

15. His Government's top priority was to eradicate poverty, especially in rural areas, by empowering vulnerable groups and creating social and physical infrastructure. India was applying transparent electronic governance to the world's largest cash-transfer programme; 50 per cent of its beneficiaries were rural women. It was implementing a scheme to ensure broad access to financial services, and its national identification number project would make it possible to provide financial and other subsidies directly, eliminating the middleman and corruption. Having achieved universal primary education, it was focusing on improving the quality of education, particularly for girls. It was implementing a policy to address the needs of senior citizens and had laws to ensure equal opportunities and social participation for persons with disabilities. Employment generation initiatives targeted young people, and micro-credit and other schemes promoted entrepreneurship among youth, women and other vulnerable groups. A rural sanitation campaign had eliminated open defecation in more than 70,000 villages, and health interventions had improved life expectancy and substantially decreased infant and maternal mortality rates.

16. Nations must stand together to root out terrorism and external threats to peace, because conflict and poverty were intertwined. Equity and unity among nations and respect for diversity were essential for sustainable development.

17. **Mr. Estreme** (Argentina) said that economic policies could not produce deep and lasting changes without a social inclusion component. Social development should be seen as a transformative process leading to full realization of the economic, political, social, civil and cultural rights of all people and, thus, a society immune from discrimination, stereotypes, prejudices and inequalities.

18. Cognizant of the complexity of poverty and the emergence of new vulnerabilities, his Government had set a goal of zero poverty. It aimed to address the problems of people at every stage of their individual and family lives, from infancy to old age, taking into account differences among regions and historically disadvantaged groups, including women, indigenous peoples, older persons, disabled persons and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons.

19. **Mr. Sandoval Mendiolea** (Mexico) said that the time had come to make the agenda of the General Assembly more relevant to the needs of Member States and to ensure that the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development worked in harmony. In other words, in the interests of coherence and efficiency, the structure and working methods the United Nations development system must be adapted to reflect the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

20. The Committee needed to make its agenda relevant to the new paradigm. Similarly, the Economic and Social Council should eliminate the Commission for Social Development, which had become irrelevant, and focus on the high-level political forum. As its Independent Team of Advisors had indicated, structural reform was long overdue.

21. Mexico considered economic and social inclusion the key to prosperity, and its national inclusion strategy had had a real impact on the well-being of Mexicans. His delegation was pleased to report that it included four youth delegates, representing Mexico's 37 million young people. On the other hand, older persons would soon constitute 15 per cent of its population. Mexico recognized and protected the rights of the many types of families in its society.

22. **Mr. Vetter** (Austria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the many concerns affecting young people pointed to the need for youth participation. Numerous countries had recently established organizations or schemes that strengthened the voice of the young. But, too often, young people involuntarily or voluntarily continued to stand on the sidelines of politics and decision-making: involuntarily because of laws made by people who considered experience a prerequisite for positive action, and voluntarily because some young people considered voting irrelevant. Young people had a stake in the future, and short-sighted policies would come at their expense. As a matter of intergenerational equity, the international community should further strengthen the voice of the young on the issues that affected them most. In that connection, he suggested that his fellow youth delegates should urge their countries to lower the voting age to 16, as Austria had done.

23. **Mr. Sobral Duarte** (Brazil) said that the past 25 years had been marked by meaningful improvements in social development, which had been to a great extent driven by advances in developing countries, including Brazil. However, continued progress would depend on the reaction to challenges such as income inequality and unemployment. The number of poorly paid or precarious jobs had actually risen since 1995. Brazil remained committed to strengthening its social protection network, including its cash-transfer programme, and was continuing to tackle extreme poverty despite the economic downturn. It was also making plans to improve the efficiency and coverage of the health and education systems through public-private partnerships. Thanks to decades of investment in education and family support programmes, it had almost totally eliminated illiteracy among 15-to-19-year olds. His Government considered the rights of people with disabilities a major priority and planned to replicate locally-developed best practices for accessibility and inclusion at the national level. Brazil welcomed the report on implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up process (A/71/61-E/2016/7), as well as the appointment of the first Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

24. Contrary to popular belief, ample academic evidence indicated that migrants had a positive impact on the countries of transit and destination. The migrant and refugee crisis illustrated the interdependence of

social development, human rights and peace. Throughout its deliberations, the Committee should bear in mind that the enormous challenges ahead could be met only through increased cooperation and solidarity.

25. **Ms. Guerra Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that social development remained a chimera for millions of people. Progress on reducing poverty was uneven, and social and economic inequalities had in some cases worsened. The countries of the South continued to bear the brunt of an unjust and unsustainable international economic and social order that undermined the commitments in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Moreover, Member States invested billions of dollars each year in military expenditures while failing to meet official development assistance commitments or provide sufficient new, predictable funding for genuine cooperation.

26. Her delegation stressed the need for sustainable, inclusive public policies based on the central role of States in social development. Cuba was working towards the Sustainable Development Goals with the moral force of having met the Millennium Development Goals despite the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States for over 50 years. In Cuba, more than two-thirds of the State budget was devoted to social development. It had achieved one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the world and had brought life expectancy to 78 years. Cuba had also been one of the first countries to eradicate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis. It was tackling the challenges of an ageing population, and it had eliminated illiteracy. In addition, it was continuing to provide cooperative assistance to other developing countries as well as medical training for thousands for foreign students.

27. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) said that, despite many promising statistics, there was cause for alarm. Poverty had increased in some regions, and income and wealth inequalities had grown in others. Extreme poverty persisted. The number of fragile States had risen, and some had collapsed in the face of climate catastrophes or conflict. Terrorism and violent extremism threatened many. His delegation would therefore continue to encourage all actors to consider what social development should entail and how to implement it for the benefit of all.

28. Morocco continued to pursue democratization, strengthen its human rights system and pursue political, economic and social reform. A national social development initiative launched in 2005 had substantially reduced poverty, marginalization, exclusion and illiteracy, as well as regional economic disparities. To achieve an inclusive, participatory and fully regionalized society, Morocco consistently devoted more than half of its national budget to social programmes. Thanks to massive investment in renewable energy, it ranked ninth in the world in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

29. **Mr. Logar** (Slovenia) said that ageism was pervasive across the globe and contributed to the economic and social exclusion of older people. To combat it, Slovenia had recently enacted an anti-discrimination law that specifically prohibited aged-based discrimination. Older persons faced a wide range of challenges that were not consistently addressed by existing human rights mechanisms. The international community must acknowledge and confront those challenges, whether by strengthening the existing framework or by drafting a new international instrument. In developing a national strategy to provide for an ageing society, Slovenia was consulting all stakeholders, including representatives of the elderly. However, its national guidelines would be significantly reinforced by the existence of adequate international standards.

30. **Mr. Šiler** (Slovenia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that Sustainable Development Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth was of particular significance for young people. Unemployment was only part of the problem. In Slovenia and Europe in general, most young people who were employed held part-time or precarious jobs. Historically, young people had proven to be able agents of change. They wanted and deserved an opportunity to show their skills, knowledge, talent and wisdom.

31. **Ms. Solórzano-Arriagada** (Nicaragua) said that implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals should be based on the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility, which would make it possible to transform the international economic order, establish a new economic and financial model and create new, sustainable production and consumption patterns. A number of States were working to achieve inclusive social development while confronting

destabilizing plans and actions; they should be allowed to proceed without interference in their internal affairs.

32. Priority areas for social development included education, health, food security and the family. Her Government had refocused the role of the State and instituted true citizen participation, as well as new forms of international cooperation and solidarity. It was working to restore the people's rights, including their rights to health, education, decent housing, employment, food and a life free from violence and pollution by, for example, extending free education to more children in rural areas and indigenous communities and providing free preventive health care and comprehensive services. Relying on a community-based security model, it had succeeded in making Nicaragua the safest country in Central America. To enhance its social development efforts, it was continuing to foster dialogue and concerted action among businesses, workers, small and mid-sized producers and government. Those efforts and policies had been recognized by the Pan American Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

33. **Mr. Mohamed** (Libya) said that numerous major challenges cast a pall on the future of social development in many countries, and many people who had escaped extreme poverty remained vulnerable to falling back into it. New or growing challenges stood in the way of development. Helping all countries to meet those challenges would require coherent and comprehensive measures, as well as national economic policies focused on creating jobs, reducing social inequalities, building infrastructure and expanding basic health services and education in an inclusive manner. For developing countries to attain the Sustainable Development Goals, the international community needed to coordinate more closely, create effective partnerships and provide development assistance.

34. The goals and targets set at the World Summit for Social Development had not been achieved, and international cooperation and coordination, in addition to building national capacities through effective partnerships with donor countries, would be required. Social development was a priority for his Government. Its efforts focused on protecting and supporting the family, raising the standard of living, promoting women's status and participation in economic life, involving young people in decision-making, and providing gender-specific training and rehabilitation, as well as on including groups such as the young, the elderly and the disabled in development planning and enforcing their rights under national law. His delegation stressed the need to respect the sovereignty, values and rights of States, including their right to development, and to promote good governance. States had primary responsibility for their own socio-economic development.

35. **Mr. Meza-Cuadra Velásquez** (Peru) said that his Government had set a five-year goal of consolidating a modern democracy and ensuring access to quality services and equal opportunities for all citizens, without distinction. A core component of the 2030 Agenda, social development should focus on empowering the people and building more inclusive, participatory and just societies.

36. **Ms. Salazar Mujica** (Peru), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the boom in the working age population in Peru afforded new opportunities to invest in the health and education of the young. To be agents of change, young people — especially those in vulnerable situations — needed to have the tools to develop their abilities and creativity and take initiatives.

37. Peru had a series of guidelines and policies on young people, including a national youth development plan drawn up with the help of representatives of civil society organizations. It also had a scholarship programme for poor, unemployed youth and a programme that provided technical training, entrepreneurship assistance and job placement services for young people.

38. It was imperative to implement policies that fostered equality between men and women. Gender equality and women's empowerment remained illusory, both internationally and in Peru. Half of the victims of femicide in Peru were under 30 years of age.

39. **Ms. Sabia** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that her Government remained fully committed to all aspects of social development. It had taken appropriate steps to address the global crisis of capitalism, balancing economic growth, redistribution of wealth and public investment. As a result, poverty and extreme poverty had plummeted, and Bolivia had the

fastest growing economy in South America. The nationalized hydrocarbon and telecommunications industries generated income that was shared with the people. Voucher programmes encouraged children to attend school and rewarded women for seeking pre- and postnatal health care. With the help of Cuba and Venezuela, her country had achieved almost universal literacy. An ambitious national housing plan provided housing for vulnerable, primarily indigenous families, and 85 per cent of the population had access to clean drinking water. The rights of disabled, young and older people were protected under the Bolivian Constitution.

40. **Mr. Pisarevich** (Belarus) said that equitable social development had been the foundation of Belarussian social policy for more than 20 years. His Government had been able to create a State strong enough to pursue consistent policies without interruption — a sine qua non for their success — and was developing a socially oriented model of development. Bucking the global trend, income inequality had declined in Belarus. His Government expected the National Assembly to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities soon and had recently launched a campaign to realize the rights of such vulnerable groups as children, persons with disabilities, persons who were HIV-positive, refugees and migrants. It had consistently supported the institution of the family and considered strong traditional families essential for the success of the 2030 Agenda.

41. **Ms. Pham** Thi Kim Anh (Viet Nam) said that the global community and the United Nations needed to strengthen efforts to ensure the social, economic and political inclusion of all, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda. Social development was a policy priority in Viet Nam. Her Government had universalized primary and secondary education and improved secondary-level vocational training, and it was investing heavily in health care with the goal of universal coverage. It had policies, programmes, laws and institutions that fostered the inclusion of women, children, disabled people, older people and ethnic minorities.

42. **Mr. Shulgin** (Russian Federation) said that the success of the 2030 Agenda would depend on developing specific measures for countries to implement the decisions of the World Summit for Social Development, and the Commission for Social Development should continue to play a leadership role in that process.

43. Despite the complex economic situation, the Russian Federation remained committed to meeting its social development obligations. To ensure sustainable development, it was working to strengthen the traditional family, with a focus on work-family balance. It had held its first-ever national "family of the year" competition in 2016. It welcomed the recent events held in commemoration of the International Year of the Family as a result of interactions between the Group of Friends of the Family and civil society and hoped that the initiative would be further developed.

44. The Russian Federation was continuing to improve the scope and quality of support for older people, who would represent 30 per cent of its population by 2030. Its youth programmes focused on social adaptation, entrepreneurship, volunteering, civil society organizations, international cooperation, youth media, tolerance and young families, and it was prepared to share its long experience with regional and national youth forums at the nineteenth World Festival of Youth and Students in 2017.

45. The needs of persons with disabilities were addressed in part through its Accessible Environment programme, which included the barrier-free schools initiative, under which the curriculum and environment of 20 per cent of schools had already been adapted to mainstream disabled children.

46. **Mr. Ruiz Blanco** (Colombia) said that the 2030 Agenda required continued commitment to eradicating all forms of poverty and reducing inequities, taking into account new challenges that threatened to reverse fragile gains. To ensure that no one was left behind, States should focus on creating an environment in which everyone enjoyed the same opportunities, regardless of personal or material circumstances.

47. Through its national disability system, Colombia was taking an intersectoral approach to fully including persons with disabilities in society. With one of the youngest populations in the world, it had a particular interest in ensuring that young people became agents of positive change and was therefore strengthening its national youth system, which supported quality education, sports, culture and entrepreneurship and

created opportunities for decent work. In view of the fundamental role of families in development, it was working to improve conditions for families of all kinds by coordinating its family policy with other policies, strategies and programmes. It reiterated its support for strengthening the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing and for a United Nations convention on the rights of older people. Firmly convinced that, for true social development, the built environment must be designed to allow everyone to achieve his or her full potential, Colombia attached considerable importance to the forthcoming third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development.

48. *Mr. Glossner (Germany), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

49. **Ms. Grignon** (Kenya) said that Governments and the international community must build on the foundation and momentum of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change. In accordance with its people-centred approach to development, Kenya set aside 30 per cent of all procurement contracts for women, young people and persons with disabilities. It provided credit access and cash transfers for unstable or vulnerable households with older persons, as well as free, age-appropriate essential health services for older persons. In addition to making primary education free and subsidizing secondary education, it was implementing a project to provide all primary school children with laptops and train their teachers on their use, and it had improved and expanded its technical and vocational training institutions. Measures for persons with disabilities included laws requiring public service and semi-public corporations to reserve 5 per cent of jobs for the disabled; enhanced enterprise development support; mainstreaming of learners with disabilities and a programme to train teachers in inclusive education.

50. Continued conflict and terrorism in the Horn of Africa forced her Government to divert billions of dollars from development to peace and security, and she appealed to Member States and the United Nations to assist it in managing and resolving the situation. Social inclusion itself would require international cooperation, multi-stakeholder partnerships and the mobilization of domestic resources. It was therefore critical that Member States should fulfil their official development assistance commitments as well as their commitments under the global partnerships for development.

51. **Ms. Senanayake** (Sri Lanka), speaking as a youth delegate, said that her country's extensive youth-related infrastructure operated under the umbrella of the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs and included organizations such as a national youth services council and a national federation of youth clubs. Free education had contributed to a literacy rate of more than 90 per cent. However, youth unemployment and underemployment remained high, owing in part to a need to develop youth skills by, for example, focusing skill development programmes on the job market and increasing computer literacy. In that connection, Sri Lanka took pride in having contributed to the establishment of World Youth Skills Day.

52. **Mr. Dulanjana** (Sri Lanka), speaking as a youth delegate, said that in 2015, with the support of the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife, the United Nations Information Centre in Sri Lanka had conducted an island-wide campaign to raise youth awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals. Sri Lanka ranked second in the world for volunteerism, and young volunteers could be a driving force for achieving sustainable development. Young people needed to be educated about the importance of advocating appropriate measures to protect human rights, including steps to increase the number of women parliamentarians and to create nurturing environments for girls and disabled children. The Sri Lankan youth delegates pledged to work to empower youth and create the necessary environment for their development.

53. **Ms. Oh** Youngju (Republic of Korea) said that, in targeting efforts to leave no one behind, it was important to consider the overarching impact. On that basis, her Government was concentrating on assisting refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, disabled persons and women and girls. For refugees, it had pledged to provide $230 million in multilateral humanitarian assistance over the next three years, and, with regard to disabled persons, it had supported the opening and recent refurbishing of the United Nations Accessibility Centre in Bangkok. It also funded projects for improving the health and education of girls in developing countries.

54. Fostering and strengthening genuine partnerships with major social actors would be crucial. It was also essential to enlist the help of young people, who were often the most passionate, fearless and productive members of society.

55. **Ms. Un** Hyung Lee (Republic of Korea), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, for young people, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was about the future they would leave their children. Education that helped young people realize their full potential and develop empathy would allow them contribute more effectively to sustainable development. It was also important to involve young people in decision-making on matters that affected them. She herself had witnessed positive changes in that regard, including the establishment of youth participation committees, almost 90 per cent of whose policy recommendations had been accepted by her Government. Her country's youth remained committed to participating in the envisioned transformation of the world.

56. **Ms. Katanasho** (Norway), speaking as a youth delegate, said that Member States had a responsibility to protect the human rights of refugee children, who were exposed to dangers such as violence, sexual abuse and human trafficking. Half of all refugee children were out of school, and the percentage of out-of-school refugee girls and disabled children was even greater. In addition to being a human right, education was essential for displaced children to live meaningful lives. Furthermore, safe learning environments made children less vulnerable to violence, sexual abuse, child prostitution and human trafficking. In closing, she urged every Committee member to sign the UNHCR #WithRefugees petition.

57. **Mr. Tollaksen** (Norway), speaking as a youth delegate, said that LGBTI refugees were among the most vulnerable. Member States had a responsibility to protect the rights of all of their citizens and had committed themselves to ensuring sustainable development for all — including LGBTI persons. The Norwegian youth delegates urged all Member States to review the status of human rights for LGBTI persons, to cooperate with the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and to take the voices of LGBTI persons into account in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

58. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, despite ambitious goals for social development, poverty and hunger persisted, and unemployment had risen. In some parts of the world, foreign occupation threatened peace and security, thereby hindering social development. After five years of gruelling war, his Government was fighting terrorism and waiting for Member States to deliver on their promises. Despite its best efforts, it had been unable to stem the economic catastrophe. Armed terrorist groups funded and supported by States in and outside the Arab world controlled the sale of crops and attacked infrastructure, hospitals, places of worship and archaeological sites. The negative impact of such systematic destruction was intensified by a multitude of unilateral coercive measures targeting economic, financial, agricultural, industrial and health activities. United States and the European Union sanctions continued to harm all Syrians, causing food shortages, decimating health care and paralyzing relief and development assistance at a time when his Government was cooperating with the United Nations and its humanitarian organizations in accordance with agreed plans for bringing humanitarian aid to his people.

59. **Ms. Zahir** (Maldives) said that social inclusion was at the heart of the Maldives' development policy. It had introduced a universal health insurance scheme, and it provided free education for all children up to the higher secondary level. To tap the potential of young people, who constituted almost half of the population, it emphasized creating new opportunities for higher education, building entertainment and sports facilities, rehabilitating and reintegrating drug users and funding youth entrepreneurship. Its laws stipulated equal pay for women, prohibited gender-based discrimination in the workplace, guaranteed equal opportunities women and men and protected women against gender-based and sexual violence. Disabled people were guaranteed equal rights under the Constitution, and their rights were expanded and enforced by a law on the protection of disabled persons.

60. Given the disproportionate impact of climate change and environmental degradation on vulnerable populations, it was vital to integrate climate change adaptation into social development policies.

61. **Mr. Sevilla Borja** (Ecuador) said that uneven progress on employment, productivity and social

integration had hindered efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve other social development goals. Defeating poverty was a moral imperative because, for the first time in history, it was due not to scarce resources or natural factors but solely to unjust, exclusionary systems and the opposition of certain elites to eliminating its structural causes. Ecuador had thus supported a development agenda that placed people before capital and promoted a more equitable distribution of income and wealth within and among societies.

62. The existence of tax evasion and tax havens, which could only be eliminated through political struggle, demonstrated that development was fundamentally a political problem. His Government was concerned at the revelation of hundreds of billions of hidden dollars that should have been used for development.

63. Ecuador's approach to development was based on living fully without the excesses of the consumer society. By investing massively in social development, it was building a more inclusive, equitable society. Given the importance of respecting the rights of persons with disabilities, it had made changes essential for their inclusion, but much remained to be done. It would continue working to achieve a more inclusive society by promoting integration, services and benefits for historically excluded groups such as persons of African descent, indigenous peoples, women, refugees and migrants, older persons, disabled persons and children and adolescents.

64. *Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) resumed the Chair.*

65. **Mr. Khiari** (Tunisia) said that achieving sustainable development for all required overcoming prejudices and reforming institutions, which would take real political commitment and numerous, concrete national and international initiatives. The development and well-being of the Tunisian people were central to Tunisia's new five-year plan, which aimed to promote good governance, a green economy, regional development, transition from a low-cost economy to an economic hub, and human and social development. Its social development policy was based on equal opportunity, elimination of exclusion and marginalization, solidarity among social groups, regions and generations and respect for human rights. In view of Tunisia's fragile economy and security, emergency measures had recently been announced, including government subsidies for hiring young unemployed university graduates ('dignity contracts') and a subsidized housing programme for the poorest and most vulnerable.

66. **Mr. Barros Melet** (Chile) said that while Chile had met the poverty-related Millennium Development Goal, it had not eradicated poverty, which disproportionately affected children and adolescents, indigenous people and in the rural population. Because income was only one dimension of poverty, it had developed a methodology for measuring multidimensional poverty. His Government was working to strengthen the social protection system by providing social safety nets in education, health and employment. Building on steady improvements in education coverage, it was implementing reforms to provide free access to quality education for all and had recently enacted a law making primary and secondary education free and prohibiting profit-making, discrimination and co-payments in publicly funded schools. It had achieved substantial improvements in maternal and infant mortality, life expectancy and other indicators.

67. Achieving greater equality between women and men was an urgent matter in Chile. It would require, inter alia, more equitable access to the labour markets, increased labour-market participation of women from low-income households; better wages for women and mechanisms enabling women workers to negotiate with their employers. To promote equity for women, his Government had established the Ministry of Women and Gender Equity and was implementing women's training programmes. Lastly, it was also implementing international standards of transparency and information access, which would improve Chileans' ability to enforce their social rights.

68. **Mr. Skinner-Klee Arenales** (Guatemala) said that a new transformative approach was needed to deal effectively with increasingly complex and interrelated problems, such as growing inequality, increased migrant flows and climate change. The pronounced inequalities and inequities that characterized Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole were more evident in a multi-ethnic, multicultural, multilingual country. For that reason, Guatemala actively supported the Group of Friends of Sustainable Development Goal 10 on reducing inequalities. As a middle-income country, it faced other significant challenges, including

providing youth employment, decent work for all, culturally relevant education, health care and social welfare. It continued to implement various social programmes for Guatemalans in extreme poverty, such as conditional money transfers in education and health, food cards, public kitchens, extracurricular activities for at-risk youth and education and employment grants.

69. Persons with disabilities faced not only poverty but also the inaccessible or exclusionary nature of public services. As part of its policy of breaking down barriers for the disabled, Guatemala had ratified the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled.

70. His delegation stressed the importance of sustained, adequate investment in youth as well as collaborative efforts to ensure their participation in every sector and offer them every possible opportunity. It also stressed the importance of promoting and protecting the rights of older persons. Noting the recent entry into force of the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons, he urged renewed effort to develop an international convention on their rights.

71. **Ms. Afzal** (Netherlands), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, 25 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, more than 200 million children were still being denied their rights. Each Member State should reassess the situation of children's rights within its own borders. Even in the Netherlands, children in emergency refugee centres were denied an education.

72. Many people wrongly thought that implementing the Sustainable Development Goals was solely a government and business matter. Much could be accomplished by motivated individuals — especially young people, who often thought outside the box — and attention should be given to motivating them. It made no sense to ignore the young, who constituted a large proportion of the world's population.

73. In 2015, the biggest gathering of young people globally had been organized by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Problems such as discrimination, insufficient social services and lack of education had made them susceptible to radicalization and violent extremism. Those young people's States had failed them, and those same States must find ways to do better. Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) on youth and peace and security should encourage security stakeholders to talk with young people affected by the root causes of conflict, demystify their policy-making processes and create trusting relationships.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.